The Local Cultures in the DDC: the Sardinian Language in recent editions

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The class of 400 DDC deals with the classification of topics related to the language.

The subdivisions covers individual languages and language families known or spoken in the world, incorporating them in the usual decimal division (Chan 2009).

The division 450 is the most interesting for us since it covers Italian, Dalmatian, Romanian, Rhaetian, Sardinian and Corsican.

The classification numbers assigned to the Sardinian language are 459.98, "Sardinian and Corsican", plus 459 and 982, which are dedicated exclusively to Sardinian and have within them various references and specifications. The classification number 459 982 7, "Models historical and geographical, non-geographical variants modern", presents expansions for geographical variations in Sardinia, contained between 459.982 71 – 459.982 74. It uses the notation shown in Table 2 for the provinces and towns of Sardinia, as instructed in the addition note: "Add to 459 982 the numbers following -459 in notation 459 1-459 4 from Table 2.

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1. The differences between language and dialect: the Sardinian problem

The problem of the distinction between a language and a dialect is still an open question in modern linguistics, far from effective resolution. The main difficulty is the absence of specific and universally defined characteristics that could provide a solid distinction between the two.

The status of language, now assigned to Sardinian, remains a rather uncertain concept. Quoting the famous Lithuanian linguist Max Weinreich, "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy"; according to this line of thought the distinction between a language and a dialect is mostly dictated by politics (Weinreich 1945, 13).

The Treccani encyclopedia defines a dialect as:

"a linguistic variety possessing a limited cultural or geographic scope, which has not reached or has lost autonomy and prestige in comparison with the other linguistic systems with which it forms, genetically, a group"[1].

To the purpose of a scientific classification, the discriminating moment when a linguistic system can be considered a dialect is when it contrasts with a national language or culture and when it belongs to a group of "genetically" compact systems, which has been determined through a series of substantially common innovations and interactions.

Considering this definition, I believe the late recognition of Sardinian as a language by the scientific community to be, to a certain extent, intellectually forgivable.

[1] See <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/dialetto/> for a wider definition of dialect.

The reasons for my elasticity leniency are to be found especially in the undeniable diversity recognizable within the "limba", when analyzed as a regional phenomenon.

The succession of significant socio-political changes and the alternation of different dominations, each one with a very different nature (carthaginian, roman, byzantine, genoese, aragonese, savoy), have led to a rather diverse and inconsistent development of the language itself (Cardia 2006).

These heterogeneous roots emerges explicitly from the analysis of the variations of Sardinian, with its two sub-families, the Sardinian-Campidanese, which includes arborean, the ogliastrino, south-central barbaricino, sarrabese, the west-campidanese from Cagliari, the sulcitano, and the Sardinian-Logudorese, which includes the northern logudorese, the central logudorese, the nuorese and the barbaricino (Wagner 1997).

Being Sardinian, I can personally testify that sometimes the differences between two varieties, especially at the lexical and phonological level, can be so significant that they make communication between individuals belonging to different linguistic communities extremely difficult. The presence of such a remarkable diversity, the absence of a historically compact social system, and an undeniable territorial fragmentation, would seem to contradict the conceptually homogenizing meaning of the term "Language"[2] (Blasco Ferrer 2002) (Pira 1984).

With a more careful analysis, however, it is evident that the status of "language" is suitable for Sardinian.

[2] A description of Sardinia is available at <http://www.eurominority.eu/version/eng/minority-detail.asp?id_minorities=212>, Association for the Promotion of Minorized Peoples

The reasons are as follows:

- Sardinian possesses its own literature, which is developed and conspicuous in every field ranging from poetry, through economy to jurisprudence. This feature provides a significant bibliographical guarantee;
- Sardinia is currently recognized as an autonomous region with special status and shows, as in the past, a strong independence from the rest of the Italian peninsula. This independent character is enhanced, geographically, from its insular nature. For this reason the presence of an autochthonous language is not surprising (Angioni 1990);
- Sardinian has been used in the past to draw up official documents and is still used by the local government for this purpose. The applications of Sardinian in this field are increasing every year (Bolognesi 2007).
- The Sardinian language is "active", meaning that it has not lost its prestige among the speakers, and that therefore, is still "alive" (Casula 2010);
- The Sardinian language is considered by many scholars, the most conservative of the Romance languages, since, due to its isolation, Sardinia has been able to preserve the original characteristics and the foundation of his language almost intact; in the Sardinian vocabulary, in fact, is possible to find evidence of different substrates such as paleo-Sardinian, Punic, Roman, Byzantine, Catalan, Spanish, and Italian (Virdis 2003).

A strong support for the elevation of Sardinian from dialect to language certainly came from its institutional recognition, with the regional law n° 26 of 15 October 1997, which affirmed the "limba" as the second official language of the region; strangely, the Statute of the Autonomous Region does not provide any protection for its own language.

Nearly a decade later, thanks to the resolution of the Regional Council n ° 16/14 of 18 April 2006, the common Sardinian has been experimentally adopted by the Region as the language for officially issued acts and documents[3].

2. The Sardinian in the DDC: a comparison between different editions

The Sardinian language underwent very different treatments in the various editions of the DDC, being set firstly in the dialects class and only later among the languages.

DDC. 20: in this edition the Sardinian language is located within the subdivision 457, "Historical and geographical variations, modern non-geographical variations", and more precisely in 457.9, "Other geographical variations" where the expansion .91-94 is dedicated to the distinctions expressed by Table 2, related to the different provinces or localities in Sardinia.

This choice seems curious, considering for example, the comparison with the classification of "Geographical variations in Sicily", to which is dedicated a specific number, 457.8. The decision to give greater weight to Sicily, which linguistically does not possess greater importance or dignity, was probably due to the presence of a more extended bibliographical guarantee in the United States.

In this edition, it is clear that Sardinian was regarded as a variant of Italian, in other words, a dialect.

DDC. 21: The classification remains unchanged in the edition 21. The location for Sardinian remains in the class 457.9, "Other geographical variations", and in particular, between numbers 457.91-457.94 for the "geographic variations in Sardinia."

[3] Official acts and documents of the Sardinia Region with respect to "limba" <http://www.sardegnacultura.it/j/v/258?s=24039&v=2&c=2803&t=7>
<http://www.sardegnacultura.it/linguasarda/limbasardacomuna/>

DDC. 22: finally a substantial change appears in this edition.

Among the suppressed subdivisions we can notice "geographical variations in Sardinia", with classification number 457.91-94, with a footnote reference that informs about the new position of the Sardinian language in the subsection 459.9.

The headline, which read in previous editions "Romanian and Ladin languages" has been changed to accommodate the Sardinian language with the new header "Romanian, Rhaetian, Sardinian, Corsican."

Two subsections are dedicated to the Sardinian: 459.98 for "Sardinian and Corsican" and 459.982 only for "Sardinian", to which must be added the notations for "Historical and geographical variations".

In this edition, therefore, Sardinian is officially recognized as a language.

I want to point out that this radical change is noticeable in the Italian edition but not in the American one, which keeps the situation unchanged compared to the previous edition. This is due to the American edition being published several years before ours, and therefore, not modified after the approval of the recognition of Sardinian language by the Editorial Policy Committee.

DDC. 23: it follows the same structure defined by edition 22. Notation 457.9 contains a cross reference, which brings us to the new location for the provinces of Sardinia, between numbers 459.982 71 and 45998274. It is thus manifest the intention to include all of the geographical variations in the class that identifies the Sardinian language, 459.982.

It is important to underline the presence of an inconsistency between subsections related to the geographical variations of the Sardinian: the expansion notations provided for historical and geographical variations of Sardinia, do not correspond to the notations for geographical expansions planned for the Sardinian provinces in

Table 2, included between -459 1 and -459 8. This way, the two provinces of Middle Campidano and Carbonia-Iglesias, covered by the notations -459 6 and -459 8 are excluded, since the expansion note does not allow to add to the base number, a number greater than 459 982 4.

It will be appropriate to report this omission to the editors of the American edition.

I conclude underlining that the major changes applied to the treatment of the Sardinian language between the various editions of the DDC, were made possible by the inherent elasticity of this particular classification, which naturally lends itself to the application of reductions, and the inclusion of expansions, in order to eliminate obsolete subjects or accommodate new subjects for which the presence of a sufficient bibliographical guarantee has been verified[4].

[4] The present essay in intentionally open to further contribution that can help in deepening the issue of language treatment in CDD and other classification systems.

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ABSTRACT: After an excursus on the peculiarity of the Sardinian language and the difference between a language and a dialect, the paper analyses the changes applied to the treatment of Sardinian language in different Dewey Decimal Classification editions.

KEYWORDS: Sardinian language, local cultures, DDC, language varieties.

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